

This year's festival featured a recreation of the landing of Hotu Matu'a at Anakena beach, and again the triathlon was held in the caldera at Rano Raraku with a following event at Tongariki.

The *haka pei* contest was held this year, shortly after a thunderous downpour turned the hillside to slush. This served to slow down the course and some contestants were literally stuck in the mud. For the first time two women competed, beginning their slide halfway down the mountain. They were topless but were wearing full body paint.

There were two candidates for queen: Maria Angelica Pakomio Pakarati and Elvira Tuki Tepano. The parade/carnival was spectacular, as always. Candidate Elvira (who subsequently won the contest) was perched on top of a gigantic 40 foot long "*moko*" (lizard) carved from a huge tree. A second float featured large *moai* and another float was in the form of a great *nanue para* (fish). The parade moved down the main street by torchlight to a temporary stage where each group performed in turn.

As part of the week-long festival, an art show was held in the covered arcade of the hipermercado, Tumu Kai, on Policarpo Toro. Exhibited were paintings and photographs by local artists. The traditional exhibition and wood carving competition was held at the school auditorium. Other handicrafts were also exhibited, including items made of bark cloth, bone fishhook pendants, objects of obsidian, and a new high (or low): Barbie dolls dressed in Polynesian feathered skirts.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

✉ Dear Editor:

In reference to an article in the *RJN* 9 (3) Sept. 1995 I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed construction of another airport runway that would be located between Anakena and Rano Raraku, and the proposed enlarged harbor/dock and cargo staging area at La Pérouse Bay.

In September of 1995 I spent three weeks with Cordell Expeditions camping at La Pérouse where eight SCUBA divers and I explored the subtidal area around Poike Peninsula. It was the expedition's intent to photograph and systematically collect marine specimens from this area. This area of Easter Island is the least sampled for its flora and fauna. The specimens collected were turned over to specialists for identification. This data maybe helpful in the future to determine what influence man has on Easter Island.

When I dove there I realized what a wonderful, pristine underwater environment Easter Island supports and I feel truly privileged to have captured some of it on film. I soon discovered that there is much more to Easter Island and explored as many of the island's archeological sites as possible.

From our camp site at La Pérouse I made several trips to locations on the eastern side of the Island including: two hikes to the top of mount Maunga Pui; three trips to Rano Raraku, one to the top of the rim; a hike along the coast to the top of

Maunga Puha between Anakena and Ovahe, and a six hour hike to Maunga Puakatiki on Poike Peninsula. From each of these vantage points one can gaze down into the valley enjoying a splendid coast to coast panorama of the undeveloped eastern side of the Island. Truly magnificent!

It is difficult to understand the need for another runway here or anywhere on Easter Island and it would only compromise Easter Island's natural beauty and destroy archaeological sites. It is hard to imagine sitting on top of Rano Raraku or Maunga Pui trying to enjoy a beautiful panorama while a long unsightly asphalt strip looms in front of you while it tears across the landscape, not to mention the noise and sight of large airplanes landing and the thunderous roar of jet airplanes taking off.

La Pérouse bay provided safe swimming recreation for us



*La Pérouse Bay from the air. Temporary camp in foreground.*

and for the local inhabitants. During our stay children from a special education school set up tents adjacent to our camp site. This was a chance for them to enjoy the outdoors, to camp, to swim in the bay and just be kids. La Perouse proved to be the ideal place, room enough for a the kids to play, and safety from the open ocean.

As an additional photographic interest I brought to Easter Island an electric powered radio controlled model airplane equipped to do aerial photography. Electric powered model airplanes are very quiet, unintrusive and should not be confused with noisy gas powered models. Flying the model at La Perouse proved to be a real challenge with almost constant winds and limited landing area cleared of rocks. Nevertheless, I did manage to take some aerial photos of our camp that I am thrilled with. The photos clearly show La Perouse as a small port that supports two or three boats used by local fisherman, and is surrounded by many archaeological features such as *ahu*, *tupa* and *manavai*.

If the proposed larger dock/harbor and container staging area were ever constructed there, the natural beauty of La Pérouse would be lost forever. Freighters anchored off shore would certainly be a threat to the marine environment. Ahu as

well as other sensitive archeological sites would be destroyed. Shipping containers stored in open view and the equipment to move them would be an unsightly eye sore to all who see it including those who come to Easter Island to seek its beauty and mystery.

Serious consideration must be given to whether these proposals are in the best interest of Easter Island and the heritage of the Rapanui people. In the future I would like to know that the view from Rano Raraku and Maunga Pui has not changed and that La Pérouse remains the same as I see it in my aerial photos and as I saw it each morning I stepped outside my tent, clean and unspoiled.

Maururu,  
Donald D Dvorak  
2218 Ventura Place  
Santa Clara CA. 95051

✉ **Comments on Pavel's Experiments: how the Easter Island statues "walked" and topknots were placed on the statues.**

The text of Pavel's paper (RNJ, Vol. 9(3):69-72) is not concerned with the subject of its title "Reconstruction of the transport of the *moai* statues and *pukao* hats". The text is about his several experiments and demonstrations regarding "walking" the giant statues of Easter Island and mounting a topknot "hat" on the head of a statue.

Pavel states that, according to legends, the statues simply walked. He cites a test conducted by Thor Heyerdahl on Easter Island that took 180 people to pull a 10 ton statue. However, Heyerdahl's experiment involved pulling a statue on a sledge in a horizontal position; "walking" was not attempted.

Pavel reports on five different attempts to walk the statues. Of the five, four were by Pavel and the fifth was by Heyerdahl, whose experiments were on dry soil. Of these, one was a performance for 11 thousand spectators which Pavel claims was a successful experiment although rain softened the ground and the bottom of the *moai* stuck in the mud, moving the dirt like a bulldozer. This suggests that it must have been a very short walk.

Pavel describes a possible method of transporting the topknots on the erect statues, and he questions whether the statues carried their *pukao* the entire route from Rano Raraku to their *ahu*. However, Heyerdahl (1975:162) had already answered that question, stating that the topknots were rolled from Puna Pau quarry to their destinations, there to be mounted on the statue heads.

In his discussion of transporting the statues down the slopes from the quarries, Pavel experimented with a method involving 14 wood levers. He does not mention the degree of slope on which his experiment took place, or how he used the levers. The face of the exterior slope of Rano Raraku quarry is at least 50 meters at a grade of 55° or more (Mulloy 1970:70). Mulloy also states that statues were lowered with ropes that passed through snubbing devices what controlled their descent; he mentions no levers in the lowering

procedure.

It is one thing to demonstrate that an erect statue can be moved by the tilt-twist method for a short distance, as Pavel has done. It is an entirely different matter to put this concept into practical use. He does not mention the susceptibility of toppling and breaking; or the risks involved in moving a statue on uneven terrain, over gullies, on soft dirt, or boulder concentrations. The upright position is the most hazardous way to move a statue. As Van Tilburg (1994:157) states: "... an upright statue, either tilted or pulled on a wooden platform over rollers will fall more than 50% of the time on a 10° slope."

One more item stands out as problematic. In raising a *pukao* with ropes and levers, Pavel mentions that they "... used the beams as a lever pivoted in the eyes of the *moai*..." I assume this is one of the reasons why the eye sockets were cut on the *moai* after they were erected..." This is a gross misunderstanding of the symbolism inherent in the eyes of the statues, to say nothing of the damage that such pressure would have inflicted upon the eye sockets. The "opening" (carving) of the eyes of a statue activated its power and *mana* and made the statue *oranga ora*: alive. A quote from Van Tilburg (1994:157) sums it all up: "Just because a method may be conceptualized in a contemporary mind does not mean it is a justified projection of the Rapa Nui past."

## References

- Heyerdahl, Thor. 1975. *The Art of Easter Island*. Doubleday and Co., New York.
- Mulloy, William. 1970. A Speculative Reconstruction of Techniques of Carving, Transporting and Erecting Easter Island Statues. *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania*, Vol. V(1).
- Pavel, Pavel. 1995. Reconstruction of the transport of the *moai* statues and *pukao* hats. *Rapa Nui Journal* 9(3).
- Van Tilburg, Jo Anne. 1994. *Easter Island Archaeology, Ecology and Culture*. British Museum Press.

Robert Koll,  
Ajijic, Mexico.

## REVIEWS

*Kulturtraditionen der Osterinsulaner und ihre Christianisierung*. Huppertz, Josefine. 1994. J. Huppertz: Sankt Augustin. DM 44.00. 115 pages, plus index of names, references. Color prints, b & w illustrations, maps, tables.

Review by Regina Pinks-Freybott, M.A.

In her recent book, Josefine Huppertz (who has been writing about PNG, East Asia in general, and China for about 35 years) aims to examine two main themes that have been the center of discussions about the many mysteries surrounding Rapanui, or Easter Island, for many years.

First, the author presents us with a highly narrative history